

A detailed oil painting of a man in Victorian-era clothing walking on a path. The man is wearing a dark top hat, a dark overcoat, a brown waistcoat, and a white shirt with a dark bow tie. He has a white beard and is looking slightly to the right. He is holding a black cane in his right hand and a black leather bag in his left hand. The background shows a dirt path leading through a lush, green landscape with trees and a small white house with a thatched roof in the distance. A horse-drawn carriage is visible on the path further back. The overall style is that of a 19th-century oil painting.

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DOCTOR THORNE

Anthony Trollope



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ANTHONY TROLLOPE





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Contents

1. The Greshams Of Greshamsbury
2. Long, Long Ago
3. Dr Thorne
4. Lessons From Courcy Castle
5. Frank Gresham's First Speech
6. Frank Gresham's Early Loves
7. The Doctor's Garden
8. Matrimonial Prospects
9. Sir Roger Scatcherd
10. Sir Roger's Will
11. The Doctor Drinks His Tea
12. When Greek Meets Greek, Then Comes The Tug Of War
13. The Two Uncles
14. Sentence Of Exile
15. Courcy
16. Miss Dunstable
17. The Election
18. The Rivals
19. The Duke Of Omnium
20. The Proposal
21. Mr Moffat Falls Into Trouble
22. Sir Roger Is Unseated
23. Retrospective
24. Louis Scatcherd
25. Sir Roger Dies
26. War
27. Miss Thorne Goes On A Visit
28. The Doctor Hears Something To His Advantage
29. The Donkey Ride
30. Post Prandial
31. The Small End Of The Wedge
32. Mr Oriel

- 33. A Morning Visit
- 34. A Barouche And Four Arrives At Greshamsbury
- 35. Sir Louis Goes Out To Dinner
- 36. Will He Come Again?
- 37. Sir Louis Leaves Greshamsbury
- 38. De Courcy Precepts And De Courcy Practice
- 39. What The World Says About Blood
- 40. The Two Doctors Change Patients
- 41. Doctor Thorne Won't Interfere
- 42. What Can You Give In Return?
- 43. The Race Of Scatcherd Becomes Extinct
- 44. Saturday Evening And Sunday Morning
- 45. Law Business In London
- 46. Our Pet Fox Finds A Tail
- 47. How The Bride Was Received, And Who Were Asked To The Wedding

1. The Greshams Of Greshamsbury

Before the reader is introduced to the modest country medical practitioner who is to be the chief personage of the following tale, it will be well that he should be made acquainted with some particulars as to the locality in which, and the neighbours among whom, our doctor followed his profession.

There is a county in the west of England not so full of life, indeed, nor so widely spoken of as some of its manufacturing leviathan brethren in the north, but which is, nevertheless, very dear to those who know it well. Its green pastures, its waving wheat, its deep and shady and—let us add—dirty lanes, its paths and stiles, its tawny-coloured, well-built rural churches, its avenues of beeches, and frequent Tudor mansions, its constant county hunt, its social graces, and the general air of clanship which pervades it, has made it to its own inhabitants a favoured land of Goshen. It is purely agricultural; agricultural in its produce, agricultural in its poor, and agricultural in its pleasures. There are towns in it, of course; dépôts from whence are brought seeds and groceries, ribbons and fire-shovels; in which markets are held and county balls are carried on; which return members to Parliament, generally—in spite of Reform Bills, past, present, and coming—in accordance with the dictates of some neighbouring land magnate: from whence emanate the country postmen, and where is located the supply of post-horses necessary for county visitings. But these towns add nothing to the importance of the county; they consist, with the exception of the assize town, of dull, all but death-like single streets. Each possesses two pumps, three hotels, ten shops, fifteen beer-houses, a beadle, and a market-place.

Indeed, the town population of the county reckons for nothing when the importance of the county is discussed, with the exception, as before said, of the assize town, which is also a cathedral city. Herein is a clerical aristocracy, which is certainly not without its due weight. A resident bishop, a resident dean, an archdeacon, three or four resident prebendaries, and all their numerous chaplains, vicars, and ecclesiastical satellites, do make up a society sufficiently powerful to be counted as something by the county squirearchy. In other respects the greatness of Barsetshire depends wholly on the landed powers.

Barsetshire, however, is not now so essentially one whole as it was before the Reform Bill divided it. There is in these days an East Barsetshire, and there is a West Barsetshire; and people conversant with Barsetshire doings declare that they can already decipher some difference of feeling, some division of interests. The eastern moiety of the county is more purely Conservative than the western; there is, or was, a taint of Peelism in the latter; and then, too, the residence of two such great Whig magnates as the Duke of Omnium and the Earl de Courcy in that locality in some degree overshadows and renders less influential the gentlemen who live near them.

It is to East Barsetshire that we are called. When the division above spoken of was first contemplated, in those stormy days in which gallant men were still combatting reform ministers, if not with hope, still with spirit, the battle was fought by none more bravely than by John Newbold Gresham of Greshamsbury, the member for Barsetshire. Fate, however, and the Duke of Wellington were adverse, and in the following Parliament John Newbold Gresham was only member for East Barsetshire.

Whether or not it was true, as stated at the time, that the aspect of the men with whom he was called on to associate at St Stephen's broke his heart, it is not for us now to inquire. It is certainly true that he did not live to see the first year of the reformed Parliament brought to a close. The then Mr Gresham was not an old man at the time of his death, and his eldest son, Francis